

Four Signs That You Should Go To Therapy **Written by Dr. Ben Michaelis**

I believe in the power of therapy. With the right connection between a therapist and patient/client amazing changes are possible.

However, I am not like the "hammer" holder who sees every problem as a nail -- I do not believe that therapy is the end all, be all -- the one and only place to get help for problems. Nor do I think that therapy is right for everyone.

Here are the first four things I consider when determining if someone should go to therapy:

Should you go to therapy?

1. Repeating Problems: Do you often find that you are getting into the same types of problems over and over again? For example, do some of the conflicts you are having with co-workers or friends feel familiar to you? Do you often end up with similar constructive feedback about your behavior when you get feedback at your job?

2. Repeating Relationships: Do you tend to get into the same types of dysfunctional relationships over and over again? For example, do you find that no matter how hard you try to do things differently, you end up dating men who could be gold medalists at the self-centered Olympics, or you routinely date overbearing women who try to run your life?

3. Repeating Patterns: Do you rely on only one or two short-term coping strategies when you are in distress? For example, when you are having a tough time at work, or with friends do you typically head right for unhealthy food, impulse shop, watch endless/mindless TV or Internet, or use alcohol or drugs to block it all out?

4. Repeating Concerns: Have at least two of your friends (who don't speak to each other) expressed concerns about your well-being, or suggested that you might need professional help?

If one or more of these ideas apply to you, it may be worth making some inquiries for a trusted therapist in your area. In terms of finding the right therapist for you, I believe that the most important factor -- along with appropriate training and experience -- is comfort level. If you feel at ease sharing your thoughts and feelings with the therapist, it's usually a positive sign of a developing therapeutic relationship. The therapist you choose should be engaged, non-judgmental, and well, helpful. If any of these qualities are lacking in the therapist you picked, you picked the wrong one for you, and it's time to move on. However, do keep looking. Many times it takes a few meetings with the wrong therapist until you find the right one (just like with dating!).

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